DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 210 EA 016 705

AUTHOR Carrington, Andrew T.; And Others
TITLE Comprehensive Curriculum Planning: Local Initiative. [Summary].
INSTITUTION Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Va.
PUB DATE Apr 84
NOTE 16p.; For complete Task Force Report, see ED 239 746.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; *Curriculum Evaluation; Data Collection; Elementary Secondary Education; *Program Effectiveness; *Research Design; *Research Projects
IDENTIFIERS Virginia Beach Schools VA

ABSTRACT

The Curriculum Assessment and Development Project in the Virginia Beach (Virginia) Public Schools is summarized. It was a comprehensive study involving students, parents, teachers, and administrators in considering two key curricular questions: "What kind of person do we want to produce?" and "What knowledge is of most worth?" The project, which resulted in the creation of the Curriculum Assessment and Development Task Force, consisted of five stages: (1) gathering data within the school system; (2) public hearings and visitations to exemplary school systems and selected colleges and universities; (3) intensive review by all concerned groups of ideas presented in the course of the study; (4) refinement and modification of data analyses, conclusions, and recommendations; and (5) development of plans for implementation and dissemination. The multi-method study, conducted from July 1981 to June 1983, resulted in the Task Force Report, a plan for change that includes 138 recommendations covering philosophy and goals, curriculum design, futures and technology, and specific curricular directions in all subject areas and grade levels. (TE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED243210

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Andrew T. Carrington
Nancy Tondre Jones
Benjamin I. Troutman
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Comprehensive Curriculum Planning:

Local Initiative

Andrew T. Carrington
Nancy Tondre Jones
Benjamin I. Troutman

April 1984

Virginia Beach City Public Schools
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Dr. E. E. Brickell
Division Superintendent

EA 016 705

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Process 3

Information Gathering 6

Recommendations 10

Implementation 11

The Task Force Report 12

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum renewal in America occurs in cycles, often influenced more by politics, economics, and social factors than by academic conditions. After a long period of neglect, we are now experiencing a resurgence of the reform spirit--education and curriculum are central policy questions for the country. While the rhetoric has the ring of familiarity, practioners know that education and curriculum are complex matters and that the process of change is demanding and difficult.

The Virginia Beach Curriculum Assessment and Development Project was a two-year, comprehensive curriculum renewal effort initiated, directed, and implemented at the local level. The model involved a rich examination of curriculum that was unusual in many respects. Most importantly, the starting point was two key educational questions that are sometimes asked but inadequately reviewed: What knowledge is of most worth? What kind of person do we want to produce? The philosophic grounding that was established through examination of these questions was critical to all other project work.

As the philosphy was shaped through the extensive involvement of students, staff, and community, certain key ideas emerged that formed a set of core beliefs for filtering issues and ideas. These beliefs were as follows:

- Education is a shared responsibility of the students, the school, the home, and the community.
- Schooling should focus on those goals most appropriately accomplished by schools.

- A strong general education is the best preparation for life in a changing society.
- Certain core skills and knowledge that are necessary for all students can be identified.
- Schools should not allow choices that will result in students being uneducated in important fields of knowledge.
- Increased demands of society call for more schooling, not less.
- Economic pressures in schools have increased and will continue to influence the educational decision-making process.
- Curriculum planning needs a national and state perspective, but local decision making is essential.
- It is vital to view curriculum comprehensively, K-12.
- Curriculum development should be a constant process of improvement and change.

The project developed a sense of unity, purpose, and renewed commitment within the school system through an open data-gathering process; extensive involvement of students, staff, and community; and focus on defining the best curriculum for the students.

The final task force report is extensive and addresses all elements of the curriculum, K-12. It establishes general curricular directions, including a curriculum foundations model that describes core unifying elements to give the curriculum unity and cohesion. The task force report provides a blueprint and a vehicle for comprehensive and constructive curriculum change with a future focus.

The sense of the report parallels that of many of the current national studies and reflects national issues filtered through local level concerns. Project Paideia, the College Board's Educational EQuality Project, and the National Commission on Excellence in Education offer particularly relevant parallels to our local

recommendations. The debate at the national level and the high level of public awareness of education as a policy issue are constructive. However, the most lasting contributions to educational renewal in America must be made at the local level by school districts involving staff and community in the change process. The Virginia Beach Curriculum and Development Project is one example of such a local effort.

PROCESS

The Curriculum Assessment and Development Project consisted of five stages described below:

Stage I (August 1981 - January 1982) focused on gathering data within the school system. Meetings were held with all school faculties, selected building representatives, administrators, supervisors, students, and many other groups. In addition, the Student Advisory Group, representing all secondary schools, was formed. Graduates of Virginia Beach high schools were consulted for additional suggestions.

Stage II (February - June 1982) centered on public involvement and visitations to exemplary school systems and selected colleges and universities. Three public hearings were held to elicit suggestions from the community. The public was also involved through the Citizen Advisory Group, parent-teacher associations, and other community groups.

Stage III (July - November 1982) involved an intensive review by all concerned groups of the ideas presented in this report.

Stage IV (December 1982 - March 1983) focused on refinement and modification of all data analyses, conclusions, and recommendations, leading to a formal report to the Division Superintendent.

Stage V (April - June 1983) provided time for the development of plans for implementation and dissemination.

During Stage I and Stage II of the project, the major focus was on the comprehensive involvement of all groups and the creation of the Curriculum Asssessment and Development Task Force, formed in December 1981. The task force was assigned the responsibility for shaping recommendations for curricular change in the Curriculum Assessment and Development Project. The thirty-six members represented a cross section of the Virginia Beach community and included parents, students, and professional staff members.

The Curriculum Assessment and Development Team consisted of five full-time professional staff members and had major responsibility for receipt, analysis, and synthesis of all data. Sources of data included meetings with teachers, students, parents, community representatives, supervisors, and administrators; suggestion forms; public hearings; visitations to school systems, colleges, and universities; conference attendance; consultant suggestions; and review of literature and existing documents. From these sources, a

status report on specific program areas was developed and presented to the task force in April 1982.

Between December 1981 and May 1982, the task force explored curricular issues with both consultants and resource persons in the school system. Staff development activities were conducted for the task force and staff members to extend exploration of curricular issues. Task force subcommittees were formed to investigate four broad areas: philosophy and goals, futures and technology, curriculum design, and graduation requirements and evaluation. Each subcommittee reported to the full task force in May 1982. Each subcommittee employed a similar process that included discussing beliefs about education; reviewing models from other systems; analyzing research, existing policies and procedures, and state and federal mandates and standards; reviewing suggestions from all sources; and preparing, reviewing, and revising reports. The report submitted by each subcommittee to the task force presented the results of these deliberations.

Following review, discussion, and critique of all subcommittee reports, a progress report was prepared. This report was reviewed by teachers, principals, assistant principals, and supervisory personnel in workshop settings from July through September 1982. Citizen and student advisory groups also reviewed selected parts of the progress report. A student survey and a community opinion survey provided further information about specific findings reflected in the progress report.

From September 1982 through March 1983, the task force developed and refined the 138 recommendations that comprised the final report to the school board.

INFORMATION GATHERING

The Curriculum Assessment and Development Project used a number of techniques for data gathering. The early stages of the project were guided by basic questions; later stages were guided by questions developed through an analysis of information and identification of information given.

Review of Curriculum Documents. All curriculum documents were reviewed to identify factors to be used as a basis for further investigation. The following factors were considered in this review:

- the stated philosophy and goals in each subject area, K-12
- the major concepts, objectives, and themes in each subject at each level
- the relationship of the written curriculum to expectations developed through analyses of research and standardized tests
- the scope and sequence in each subject area
- the relationship of special programs to the total curriculum

Teachers. Teachers had numerous opportunities for involvement. Team members held teacher orientations and were available for classroom visitations and meetings in all schools. Teachers were encouraged to communicate ideas directly to team members, school representatives, representatives on curriculum committees and the task force, supervisors, and principals. Teacher representatives also participated in intensive review workshops.

Instruction and Curriculum Specialists. Both supervisors and curriculum assistants had regular opportunities for input and review and assisted with a careful definition of existing programs.

Principals. Principals had opportunities for input and review through scheduled group meetings, visits by team members to individual schools, and individual contact with team members or representatives on the task force. Assistant principals had similar avenues for involvement.

Other school system personnel. Existing curriculum committees provided opportunities for teachers, librarians, counselors, media personnel, and supervisors to develop and make suggestions for consideration in the assessment effort. Meetings with diagnostic and counseling personnel provided a unique perspective on special student needs, curriculum sequences, course requirements, and options. Library and media personnel discussed the direction and impact of technology and media on education. Opportunities were available for all groups to participate.

State Department Personnel. State Department personnel provided perspectives on research, instructional mandates, future trends, and the status of curriculum.

Consultants. Throughout the assessment and development process, consultants, both curriculum generalists and subject matter specialists, were involved to clarify, to criticize, and to improve all aspects of the study.

College/University Personnel. Visits to colleges/universities in the Virginia/Maryland area and to major colleges/universities throughout the United States enabled the team to determine the following:

- identification of specific strengths and/or weaknesses of Virginia Beach City Public School students and high school students in general
- identification of common traits (attitudes, values, habits, choices) characteristic of Virginia Beach students enrolled in their institution
- recommendations of ways to strengthen public school programs
- prediction of future needs of students planning to enter college

Visitations to Virginia Beach City Public Schools. Visits to all schools in Virginia Beach provided data from direct contact with school personnel, PTAs, and others. In addition, visits enabled the team to determine the following:

- clarification of curriculum philosophy, goals, and objectives as implemented in the schools
- identification of concerns affecting the implementation of the curriculum
- identification of strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum

Visitations to Other School Systems. Visits to school systems with outstanding reputations for strong and effective instructional programs and curricular structure provided the following information:

- curriculum assessment and development process in their school divisions
- considerations relative to strengths and weaknesses of existing programs
- curriculum materials that might serve as useful models
- discussions concerning plans for change

Public Hearings. One of the most significant aspects of the Curriculum Assessment and Development Project was the meaningful involvement of the citizenry in determining the direction of education in Virginia Beach. Three well-attended public hearings demonstrated the school system's position that the assessment and development of curriculum are matters of public policy.

Advisory Groups. Advisory groups provided additional public and student involvement. Two advisory groups were formed to review recommendations and to offer program suggestions. The focus of the Citizen Advisory Group was:

- identification of community concerns regarding the curriculum
- identification of skills needed by high school graduates in order to enter the business community
- consideration of significant areas of strengths and weakness in Virginia Beach graduates

The Student Advisory Group considered issues in the following areas:

- strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum as a whole and within individual areas of interest
- relationship of the curriculum to student needs for the future
- identification of areas of student concern

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the Task Force Report are divided into five major sections:

- Priorities for curriculum and program, kindergarten through grade 12
- Elementary grades, kindergarten through grade four
- Intermediate grades, five through eight
- High school grades, nine through twelve
- Special programs and resource services

The key elements of the recommendations involved the revision of the process of curriculum development and management. Curriculum development, in order to be a cohesive and unified process, must be based on a central set of beliefs. The curriculum foundations model contained in the Task Force Report provides those central beliefs through a framework for the common learnings that should be a part of the education of all students. The framework includes five learning skills and processes and five curriculum areas.

The belief in a common body of knowledge for all students can be seen throughout the report but is particularly evident in the revised graduation requirements that include fine arts and practical arts for all. Also part of the common body of knowledge for all students is the centrality of communication and thinking. The Task Force Report directed that the accurate and expressive use of the oral and written language be fostered throughout the grades in all subject areas.

The Task Force Report suggested an interdisciplinary approach to curriculum development that will build connections among disciplines wherever possible. A unified science and health program through the eighth grade is an example of a natural linkage that was proposed. A revision of the curriculum development process was also proposed. The recommendations directed that a cyclical process of curriculum evaluation and revision be established and that curriculum be examined from a kindergarten through grade twelve perspective.

Increased attention to clear and rigorous standards for all students was addressed in other recommendations that included:

- A more objective system for making promotion-retention decisions in kindergarten through grade eight
- Increased graduation requirements
- Revised grading policy to encourage students to take more rigorous courses

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation process must be long term. The first group of recommendations (22%) were approved by the School Board in August 1983. This first group of recommendations included increased graduation requirements in mathematics, science, and the fine arts. A careful examination of the existing curriculum had indicated that extensive curriculum development was needed in these areas to provide appropriate courses for students in light of the increased requirements.

The report of the task force was most explicit in its recommendations relative to perceived organizational needs, particularly regarding instruction, planning, and evaluation. Very early in the development of the work of the task force, it became apparent that a major reorganization and reallocation of personnel would be needed. That reorganization has recently been adopted by the School Board. It includes an emphasis on instruction, collaboration, the linkage of staff development and curriculum development, and a kindergarten through grade twelve curricular perspective and interdisciplinary linkage.

THE TASK FORCE REPORT

The Task Force Report provides a more complete description of the process and various resource information. It includes:

- 138 major recommendations grouped in five major areas
- Process summary
- Listings of the various advisory groups and the task force
- Listing of visitations and project consultants
- Student Survey
- Community Opinion Survey
- Futures and Technology Report
- Curriculum Foundations Report
- Computer Report

A complete Task Force Report is available by writing to

Dr. Benjamin Troutman, Director
Curriculum Assessment and Development
Virginia Beach City Public Schools
P. O. Box 6038
Virginia Beach, VA 23456.

The report may also be obtained from ERIC by writing for

PS014039
Brickell, E. E.
CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOMENT
PROJECT: TASK FORCE REPORT

ERIC
Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood
Education
805 West Pennyslvania Avenue
Urbanna, IL 61801